

740.0011 European War 1939/19216a : Telegram

*The Secretary of State to the Minister in Finland (Schoenfeld)*³⁸

WASHINGTON, February 2, 1942—5 p. m.

31. Following treacherous Japanese attack on December 7, and subsequent declarations of war on us by Germany and other Axis powers on December 11, 1941, we have been compelled to review in the light of those events the military and political situations in all other countries not signatory to the Declaration by United Nations³⁹ or at war with us. In the case of Finland we find that probably the most outstanding factor at this time is the use which German troops are

³⁷ For correspondence on negotiation of this treaty signed March 12, 1940, see *Foreign Relations*, 1940, vol. I, pp. 298-317; for translation of text, see Department of State *Bulletin*, April 27, 1940, p. 453.

³⁸ In response to an inquiry by Assistant Secretary of State Adolf A. Berle, Jr., regarding the "objective" of this telegram, Mr. L. Randolph Higgs of the Division of European Affairs, who drafted it, explained in an attached memorandum dated January 30, 1942:

"With possibility in mind we or British may find it necessary at some future time to make a landing at Petsamo or move through Northern Finland from Murmansk area against Germans in Northern Norway and Finland, Eu [Division of European Affairs] thinks it desirable to emphasize at this time for the record the use which German troops are making of Finnish territory.

"Another aim of the attached telegram is to reinforce the thought to the Finnish Government that by prolonging its close association with Germany it risks running into unavoidable complications which neither it nor we desire."

When the Acting Chief of the Division, Ray Atherton, initialled this memorandum, he added: "I cite also spirit of attached" telegram.

³⁹ Declaration of January 1, 1942, vol. I, p. 25.

making of Finnish territory as bases of military operation, so far as we are aware, with the full consent of the Finnish Government.

We are unaware of any evidence that the Finnish Government has taken any action since Germany's declaration of war on us or even before that date, to clarify or justify its position with regard to the continued presence in Finland of German armed forces and use of Finnish territory as a base of operations by German forces. It must be recognized that the continued presence and activities of German armed forces on Finnish territory unopposed by the Finnish Government has a direct bearing on the status of Finland in the present war situation.

You are requested to bring this matter orally to the attention of the Finnish Government, leaving with it a memorandum of your oral presentation of our views.

HULL

740.0011 European War 1939/19204 : Telegram

The Minister in Finland (Schoenfeld) to the Secretary of State

HELSINKI, February 3, 1942—7 p. m.

[Received 11:27 p. m.]

91. Finance Minister Pekkala called on me this afternoon as he said to inquire as to present state of relations between Finland and the United States which is matter of concern to many here. He said frankly he was not kept informed about foreign policy but whenever he had inquired recently either of Prime Minister Rangell or Minister Tanner,⁴¹ with special reference to United States, he had been told there were no new developments. I told the Minister that it was difficult for me to discuss these matters with him in present circumstances but that I felt Finland's position could not be considered stationary and was necessarily affected by rapid developments of the war, this being particularly true since attack on United States by Japan. Hence, I said Finland's position seemed to require clarification and time was of the essence.

Pekkala said he could assure me of two things: First, that great majority of Finnish people were sympathetic to cause of the democracies and, second, that conviction was steadily growing that Finland must make separate peace with Soviet Union. He did not know how long it would take for these facts to find expression in official action but he appreciated importance of time element. He expressed opinion that even Field Marshal Mannerheim and many in the Finnish Army shared these views and assured me they were also shared not only by

⁴¹ Väinö A. Tanner, Minister of Commerce and Industry until May 1942; then Minister of Finance.

Social Democratic Party leaders including Tanner and rank and file of that party but by numerically smaller political groups including Swedish Party and Progressives. When I inquired as to attitude of Agrarian Party his answer was they were still convinced that Russians must and could be crushed and in any case took little interest in foreign policy.

Pekkala said he never discussed anything with Foreign Minister Witting and intimated some lack of confidence in President Ryti but he asserted categorically that the two propositions above stated were absolutely in accordance with facts and that movement based on them was growing steadily.

I expect to see Foreign Minister Witting tomorrow to make representation directed in your 31, February 2. Meanwhile it is apparent from Pekkala's visit and from other indications which Department will have noted in my recent telegrams that there is increasing uneasiness here both about relations with us⁴² and possibility of Finland withdrawing from the war.

SCHOENFELD

740.0011 European War 1939/19219 : Telegram

The Minister in Finland (Schoenfeld) to the Secretary of State

HELSINKI, February 4, 1942—3 p. m.

[Received 8 : 55 p. m.]

94. Department's telegram No. 31, February 2. I spoke to Minister for Foreign Affairs as directed today and left with him memorandum in confirmation of oral statements. He said he could not make considered comment at the Foreign Office and would have to examine memorandum most carefully.⁴³

He pointed out at once that Finland is now dependent for 93% of its imports on German good will, a remark which was doubtless prompted by the fact that German delegation for renewal of trade agreement negotiations has just arrived here and called on him immediately preceding my visit. He also said that Finland's position with regard to German troops and use of Finnish facilities by Germans was similar to that of Iceland with regard to Allied troops and asked

⁴² The Minister in Finland again pointed out in his telegram No. 98 of February 5, 1942, that public opinion toward the United States was largely uninformed owing to the suppression of American news coming from non-Axis sources. To overcome this deficiency, the Legation had recently commenced the distribution of a news bulletin to some 375 persons, who had accorded it an enthusiastic reception, while it also speedily ran afoul of the German Legation. The Minister further declared that German officials at this same time were making determined efforts to prevent the showing of American motion picture films in Finland. (740.0011 European War 1939/19245)

⁴³ Foreign Minister Witting's *aide-mémoire* in reply is contained in telegram No. 127, February 16, from the Minister in Finland, p. 39.

what Icelandic Government could do in event of German demand for evacuation of Allied troops from that Island. I said I saw little similarity between the two situations inasmuch as Finland was actively and voluntarily engaged in war.

Witting went on to say that even in the time of Russian domination of Finland⁴⁴ there had often been periods when no "constructive" action could be taken by Finnish patriots and that Finland at the present time was "like a mouse in a trap" and similarly in a period when there was little to do but keep quiet.

It was evident that so far as Witting is concerned there was little disposition to try to shake off the German grip on this country if only on the theory that Finland could not risk starvation which he believes will ensue for Finns if Germans have any pretext for interrupting imports to this country.

SCHOENFELD

740.0011 European War 1939/19350 : Telegram

The Minister in Sweden (Johnson) to the Secretary of State

STOCKHOLM, February 9, 1942—6 p. m.
[Received February 10—12:56 a. m.]

239. My 229, February 7, 1 p. m.; 211, February 5, 5 p. m.; 103, January 19, 7 p. m.; 38, January 9, 2 p. m.;⁴⁵ and Department's 31, February 2, 5 p. m. to Helsinki. From all information available here it seems clear that Finnish military situation is rapidly deteriorating. Should spring and summer arrive without a cessation of Russian-Finnish fighting and a Russian offensive take place ending in the complete military collapse of Finland there would arise possibilities of reaction in Sweden which in my view cannot be ignored. The further Russian forces penetrate into Finnish territory during such an offensive the harder would become the terms on which Finland might make peace and as the Russian forces got nearer the Swedish and Norwegian frontiers there would arise in this country a cry for assistance to Finland. Such assistance in those circumstances would suggest Swedish collaboration with the Germans and would play strongly into the hands of the small but potentially influential pro-German group in Sweden as well as appealing to those circles, including officers of the high command, who though not pro-German doubt possibility of an Allied victory. An appeal for Swedish assistance for Finland in this eventuality would also command popular support from among classes who have no sympathy for Germany. As a result this country might be faced with an internal political

⁴⁴ Finland was a Duchy and Grand Duchy in the Russian Empire between 1809 and 1917.

⁴⁵ None printed.

crisis of the first order, which could endanger present coalition government and might place in power a group whose policies would be dangerous to democratic cause.

Madam Kollontay, Soviet Minister, has expressed herself privately as being exceedingly concerned about possible effects on Sweden of a Russian victory and advance into Finnish territory. She believes that only hope for Russo-Finnish peace is for a simple cessation of fighting. My understanding is that she has brought her view to attention of her Government and is exploring possible ways in which it may be made effective.

JOHNSON

711.60D/55

*Memorandum of Conversation, by the Under Secretary of State
(Welles)*

[WASHINGTON,] February 12, 1942.

The Minister of Finland called to see me this morning at his request. The Minister began the conversation by asking what opinion I had with regard to relations between Finland and the United States at this moment.

I replied that, as he knew, I had been away for the better part of a month and since my return I had been so occupied with urgent problems that I had not had any opportunity to acquaint myself with recent developments regarding Finland.

The Minister went into a very long and exceedingly rambling conversation which always came back to the expression of his hope that relations between Finland and the United States would not deteriorate and that there would be nothing like a severance of relations between the two countries.

I again and again reiterated the same basic principle, namely, that in as much as the United States was now engaged in war it was impossible for it to consider maintaining normal or understanding relations with any country which was actively assisting the Axis powers.

The Minister insisted that his Government had officially stated to the United States that it would not participate in any way in the war between the United States and Germany.

I repeated that if Finland was actively engaged in assisting Germany in fighting Russia that obviously constituted active assistance on the part of Finland to the enemy of the United States.

I made it clear that because of our traditional friendship for the Finnish people we had so far undertaken a very patient and forbearing policy towards Finland, but that if Finland were now to embark upon major offensive operations against the Soviet Union, it would

inevitably give rise to a situation which I was sure the Minister and I would regard as regrettable.

The Minister endeavored, as usual, to get me to give him a detailed statement as to how far Finland could undertake military operations against the Soviet Union without being regarded as going beyond the bounds of what this country would stand. To this I consistently replied that the statements I had already made on this and previous occasions and the statements made to the Minister by the Secretary of State made perfectly clear beyond the shadow of any misapprehension the position of this Government in that regard.

The Minister likewise endeavored to get me to give him some information with regard to the conversations between Stalin⁴⁶ and Mr. Eden. I said that I regretted that I was not in a position to give him any information on that point.

The Minister handed me a copy of the address made by the President of Finland at the opening of the present session of the Finnish Parliament which is attached herewith.⁴⁷

S[UMNER] W[ELLES]

740.0011 European War 1939/19350 : Telegram

The Secretary of State to the Minister in Sweden (Johnson)

WASHINGTON, February 13, 1942—7 p. m.

85. As a means possibly of sounding out Swedish Government on matters mentioned in your 239, February 9 and of influencing it to urge Finnish Government not to participate in further offensives against the Soviet Union we suggest you press on such Swedish officials as you deem appropriate the following thoughts:

Ryti's recent speech and other information now available to us strongly suggest Finnish Government has decided to gamble everything on a final German victory and may now be considering collaboration with German forces in further offensives in Soviet territory. We take such a serious view of these developments we hope that in the interest of Finland and the rest of Scandinavia the Finnish Government might be persuaded not to take any action which would further complicate Finland's position with anti-Axis forces but to make every effort to come to a peaceful understanding with the Soviet Union at the earliest possible moment—or at least to arrange for the cessation of fighting.

Repeat to Helsinki.

HULL

⁴⁶ Iosif Vissarionovich Stalin, President of the Council of People's Commissars of the Soviet Union, People's Commissar for Defence, etc.

⁴⁷ Not printed.

660D.6231/138 : Telegram

The Minister in Finland (Schoenfeld) to the Secretary of State

HELSINKI, February 14, 1942.

[Received February 15—3:45 a. m.]

122. New trade agreement between Germany and Finland was signed here yesterday following negotiations since February 3. Official statement published press today to effect that "negotiations conducted in spirit of brotherly and hearty cooperation inspired by common task offered opportunity for far reaching consideration all economic questions and resulted in complete agreement". Statement adds "Within framework agreements reached we received assurance that on German side everything in their power being done in field both of public supply and industrial and financial economy so that Finland's economic striking power in common struggle may be kept unbroken and strengthened and so that Finland on its side notwithstanding difficulties caused by war and demands created thereby shall deliver to Germany in highest possible quantity important products from its forestry resources and industry." Also announced that special agreement simultaneously concluded regarding exchange goods between Finland and Norway.

German negotiator Schnurre⁴⁸ quoted in press having said negotiations not only involved extension previous agreements regarding exchange goods and regulation of payments but intensification thereof. Said negotiations would be undertaken middle this year within framework agreement reached yesterday regarding details exchange of goods and that discussions covered all economic questions including raw materials and foreign trade. Finland would be provided with coal, iron, artificial wool, etc., in sufficient quantity. Added that as clearing procedure cannot be maintained to full extent further regulation of payments will be made later and that "Finland despite great difficulties has delivered great quantities forest products and other things to Germany" also that "agreement reached is specially advantageous to Finland and shows that talk of weakness of Finnish economy is without foundation".

SCHOENFELD

740.0011 European War 1939/19505 : Telegram

The Minister in Finland (Schoenfeld) to the Secretary of State

HELSINKI, February 16, 1942.

[Received February 17—2:44 a. m.]

127. Minister Foreign Affairs this afternoon handed me following *aide-mémoire* in English language under today's date.

⁴⁸ Karl Schnurre, head of the Eastern European and Baltic Section of the Commercial Policy Division of the German Foreign Office.

Aide-Mémoire. The arrival of German troops in Finland was originally based on a transit arrangement made in September 1940⁴⁹ and referring to transportation of German military personnel and matériel through Finland from Germany to northern Norway and back. Having received from the German Government an enquiry suggesting such an arrangement the Finnish Government gave their consent. The main reason why the Finnish Government took this attitude was the policy of the U. S. S. R. towards Finland after the conclusion of the peace in Moscow. The numerous demands on Finland put forward by the U. S. S. R. clearly indicated that the Soviet Government was not disposed to treat Finland as a sovereign state with which, in conformity with the peace treaty, it ought to have entertained friendly and normal relations. Immediately before the conclusion of the above mentioned arrangement with Germany, the Finnish Government had been forced to grant to the Soviet Government free passage of military transports on the railway between the frontier and the Hanko⁵⁰ territory.⁵¹ It became obvious from the continued pressure and policy of extortion carried out by the Soviet Government that they were preparing for Finland the fate of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania,⁵² a fate to which the Finnish nation will never submit without fighting. During the months following the conclusion of the arrangement with Germany it became evident that the Finnish Government had correctly appreciated the consequences of the German troop transports as a check on Soviet efforts to interfere in Finnish affairs as for the time being the crisis was postponed.

This is the background against which the presence of German troops in Finland ought to be seen and considered.

However, the developments in the world situation on which Finland had no influence, led before long to new tension and to open war. In June, 1941, the U. S. S. R. attacked Finland. Finland was thus involved in hostilities with the U. S. S. R. already at war with Germany. The presence of German troops in Finland now took on a new aspect. Their activities from Finnish territory against Soviet forces are a consequence of the struggle against the common enemy. These relations of co-belligerency were created by the military situation and without any political commitments.

Finland wages war against the U. S. S. R. for the purpose of safeguarding her existence and permanent security and does not want to become involved in the events referred to in the first paragraph of the American Minister's memorandum dated February 4, 1942.⁵³

Attaching the greatest importance to the continued maintenance of the friendly relations between Finland and the United States of

⁴⁹ The Minister in Finland summarized the provisions of this transit agreement of September 22, 1940, in his telegram No. 416, September 26, 1940, *Foreign Relations*, 1940, vol. I, p. 347.

⁵⁰ Hangö, Khanko.

⁵¹ This convention of September 6, 1940, was reported by the Chargé in the Soviet Union in his telegram No. 1173 of September 15, 1940, *Foreign Relations*, 1940, vol. I, p. 343.

⁵² For correspondence on the forcible occupation of the Baltic States and their incorporation into the Soviet Union, see *ibid.*, pp. 357 ff.

⁵³ This memorandum was given to the Foreign Minister of Finland by the American Minister at the time of carrying out the instructions sent by the Department in telegram No. 31 of February 2, p. 33, about which he had reported in telegram No. 94 of February 4, p. 35.

America the Finnish Government believes that to achieve their aim mentioned above cannot be against the aspirations of the American Government. Helsinki February 16, 1942.”

Repeated to Stockholm.

SCHOENFELD

740.0011 European War 1939/19512 : Telegram

The Minister in Finland (Schoenfeld) to the Secretary of State

HELSINKI, February 16, 1942—7 p. m.

[Received February 17—4: 18 a. m.]

128. My 94, February 4, and 127 today. When Foreign Minister Witting this afternoon handed me his memorandum I [read] it in his presence and after doing so I had two inquiries to make. First, with reference to statement in third paragraph from end of memorandum to effect that U. S. S. R. attacked Finland last June, inquired whether Finnish Government considered there was no connection between presence of Germans in Finland at that time and alleged Soviet attack. His answer was that Finland considered attack in June 1941 part of same aggression which had begun in November 1939 and had continued even following Moscow peace. Secondly, I asked whether penultimate paragraph of his memorandum in light of official statements including President Ryti's latest speech that Finland was fighting for destruction of Bolshevism and would continue until common victory with Germany defined purpose of safeguarding Finnish existence and permanent security. Witting said destruction of Bolshevism was certainly Finnish war aim.

Witting then alluded to effort made by Finnish Government in summer of 1940 to secure agreement with Sweden for common defense and failure of that effort through Swedish timidity and later formal Soviet objection.⁵⁴ He expressed view already expressed by Wasastjerna⁵⁵ as previously reported that Soviet objection was very shortsighted for Finnish-Swedish agreement at that time would have made it possible for this country as well as Sweden to remain neutral.

Accumulation of Russian strength in Finnish area in summer of 1940 especially in tense crisis of August of that year had led directly to situation in which Finnish-German transit agreement in September was accepted here as great relief.

⁵⁴ Information about the consideration of plans for the formation of a northern defensive alliance, and the note of March 27, 1940, from the Soviet Union to the interested Scandinavian countries warning against the creation of any such combination, is contained in telegrams No. 315 of March 20, 1940, and No. 330 of March 26, 1940, from the Ambassador in the Soviet Union, and in telegrams No. 152 of March 28, 1940, and No. 164 of April 4, 1940, from the Minister in Sweden. *Foreign Relations, 1940*, vol. I, pp. 318, 320, 323, and 325, respectively.

⁵⁵ Jari Axel Wasastjerna, the Finnish Minister in Sweden.

As early as November 1940 Witting again said Germans were aware of far-reaching Russian preparations including accumulation of men and matériel for attack not only on Germany, but incidentally on Finland which was confirmation of Finnish apprehensions in summer of 1940 when Finland knew Russians had every intention of attacking this country again.

I then turned to statement in penultimate paragraph of Witting's memorandum to effect that Finland does not want to become involved in greater war and asked whether this signified that Finland had already attained her strategic aims and that continuance of hostilities against Russians was result only of Russian offensive tactics at the front. Witting said that in a democratic country like Finland where military and civil direction was in different hands it was not possible as in authoritarian states precisely to define strategic aims of military leadership. It was true, however, that for long time past activity on Finnish front was due to Soviet offensive tactics which incidentally had recently been very costly to Russians in Poventsa area where only some 60 prisoners had been taken in an operation which had cost Russians approximately 3,700 killed.

I intimated that what seemed to us to be of primary importance at this time was relation of Finnish military action to necessary passage of overseas supplies for Russia in our struggle against Germans. He asked how in practical terms Finland could control German action in this respect at a time when Finland was almost wholly dependent upon German good-will for imported supplies necessary to sustain life of Finnish people.

I asked whether this was not somewhat humiliating position for Finns to be in and whether they had given up all pretension of exercising their own free will. He countered by saying that free will of Finland was determined by its geographical position in precisely the same way as that of Sweden or of the United States which latter was protected by two oceans.

It seems perfectly clear that while Finns may still hope not to be forced to take aggressive action which will interfere with passage of our supplies for Russia they have very little confidence that this hope can be realized and are prepared if necessary to face consequences of enforced cooperation with Germany. I believe therefore it would be true to say Finns will not voluntarily take any action further to complicate their position with anti-Axis forces as suggested in your 85, February 13, to Stockholm, but that they rather expect that military necessity or events over which they have no control preclude possibility of their coming to peaceful understanding with U. S. S. R. at this time or even to arrange for cessation of fighting on Finnish front. I do not think it likely that Sweden can exert their influ-

ence successfully as desired by Department. The Finnish mind is made up.

Repeated to Stockholm.

SCHOENFELD
